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SUBJECT: HOLY SEE RAISES OBJECTIONS TO RWANDA'S GACACA TRIBUNALS

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Holy See deputy foreign minister Parolin asked ambassador to transmit to Washington a note verbale and accompanying text on the gacaca tribunals in Rwanda. The Holy See believes that the tribunals are politically manipulated and procedurally flawed and are not serving their intended purpose. Embassy will fax these documents to desk. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Ambassador and DCM called on Monsignor Pietro Parolin, Undersecretary for Relations with States (equivalent to deputy foreign minister) April 3 at Parolin's request. Parolin gave ambassador a note verbale requesting that it be brought to the attention of the USG along with an accompanying note entitled "The Gacaca Traditional Tribunals in Rwanda". This document describes the time and effort required to establish the gacaca tribunals, their organization and authorities, and their stated purpose. It goes on to say that the gacaca structure is not serving its intended purpose because the innocent are wrongly imprisoned while the guilty are freed. The document ascribes this failure to political considerations and procedural shortcomings, concluding that "the whole process seems to be a set-up".

¶3. (SBU) Parolin said the Holy See has also raised the matter with several EU governments but has not yet received any responses. Parolin said the Holy See is well aware of the sensitivity of the subject, and does not have an alternative proposal at the moment, but believes it has reliable information from first-hand witnesses (including some priests). He noted that relations between the Rwandan government and the Church are not good. Parolin cited the example of Father Guy Theunis -- a Belgian priest arrested in Kigali in September 2005 on genocide charges, but now back in Belgium -- to illustrate the politicized nature of the gacaca. He also noted that numbers of Catholics have been killed in recent years in Rwanda but no one seems to respond.

¶4. (U) Embassy will fax copies of the note verbale and accompanying note to Vatican desk in EUR/WE, and would appreciate guidance on how to respond.

ROONEY